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CounterPunch

$2.50

FEBRUARY 16-29, 2000 *Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair* **VOL. 7, NO. 4**

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All Show, No Blow (Till He Blows)

The Mark of McCain

John McCain says he models himself after TR. "I'm a Teddy Roosevelt kind of Republican", McCain told a crowd of about 1,000 people in East Lansing, Michigan. "I believe America needs a strong leader. And most Republicans take in pride in indentifying with TR, who believed that second only to the national defense, one of our most important public duties is to wisely husband the country's natural resources. Like TR I'll be the kind of president who will have the courage to stand up to the special interests and say no. There are some things they just can't have." The crowd of students plus those elusive Reagan Democrats cheered.

Two days later McCain was in Spokane, capital of Washington's Inland Empire, where the Republican Party is dominated by big timber, big agriculture and the hydro-power conglomerate that includes aluminum factories, barge fleets and pulp mills. Over his 18-year career in the House and Senate John McCain has rarely let these same special interests down. He has supported property rights legislation, backed the salvage logging rider, fought measures for stricter control over pesticides and harshly denounced proposals to breach dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers to save endangered salmon.

Even in that crowd, McCain claimed to be a conservationist: "It's possible for a conservative president to be an environmentalist." So the question is what kind of environmentalist is John McCain?

McCain has confused many observers. Even staunchly Democratic organizations such as the League of Conservation Voters, can't seem to find it in themselves to pin him down on the environment. The League's profile of McCain notes that "on most issues dealing with Arizona, national park protection and auto-efficiency standards, his record ranges from good to excellent". But the group's own annual ranking (heavily prejudiced against Republicans, it must be admitted) gives the Arizona senator a lifetime rating of only 20 per cent. He twice rated a zero.

When he's out West, McCain is fond of saying that his political mentor was Barry Goldwater. But McCain is no Goldwater. And that's not a compliment. Goldwater was, essentially, a western populist, a Libertarian version of Mike Mansfield, Lee Metcalf and Frank Church. Goldwater always had a passion for the outdoors and in the end singled out as his greatest political regret his vote to authorize the construction of Glen Canyon dam. McCain is not one for searing self-scrutiny. As with the rest of his political agenda, McCain's environmentalism has always been pointedly opportunistic.

Clearly, McCain senses Bush's vulnerability on the environment. GW's record in Texas is bleak. You can search in vain for even the hollow green rhetoric his father was so adept at delivering.

McCain has also analyzed the polls with an obsessiveness comparable to Clinton's. Of particular interest has been Republican pollster Frank Luntz's work, which shows that upwards of 70 per cent of Republicans favor strong environmental laws and increased funding for national parks. The environment, in other words, is a wedge issue , one that can win over independents, Reagan Democrats, Republican moderates and women. Hence, McCain's speech on the environment in

(**McCain** continued on page 5)

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Our Little Secrets

Psyops and CNN

Now comes buttress to something you've always believed anyway. The CNN newsroom has been successfully infiltrated by psy-ops specialists from the Pentagon. CNN collaborated in the take-over. We have to thank Abe de Vries of the Dutch periodical Trouw for this story. For a short time last year, CNN employed military specialists in 'psychological operations' (psyops). This was confirmed to Trouw by a spokesman of the U.S. Army. "Psyops personnel, soldiers and officers, have been working in CNN's headquarters in Atlanta through our programme 'Training With Industry'", Major Thomas Collins of the U.S. Army Information Service told de Vries in mid February. "They worked as regular employees of CNN. Conceivably, they would have worked on stories during the Kosovo war. They helped in the production of news."

These military, a "handful" according to Collins, stayed with CNN for at least a couple of weeks "to get to know the company and to broaden their horizons". Collins maintains that "they didn't work under the control of the army". The temporary outplacement of U.S. Army psyops personnel in various sectors of society began a couple of years ago. Contract periods vary from a couple of weeks to one year.

The military/CNN personnel belonged to the airmobile Fourth Psychological Operations Group, stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. One of the main tasks of this group of almost 1200 soldiers and officers is to spread "selected information". The propaganda group was involved in the Gulf war, the Bosnian war and the crisis in Kosovo. So far CNN has not commented on the allegations. "I don't believe that we would employ military personnel; it doesn't seem like something we would normally do," said CNN-spokeswoman Megan Mahoney told de Vries. But when the U.S. Army Information Service confirmed the news, Mahoney said she would have to contact CNN's senior officials. However, by February 20 CNN still would not provide an offical statement to Trouw.

Col. Christopher St. John is Commander of the Fourth Psychological Operations Group. De Vries reports that in a military symposium on Special Operations that was held behind closed doors in Arlington, Virginia in early February, Col. St. John said the cooperation with CNN was a textbook example of the kind of ties the American army wants to have with the media. De Vries cites a report in the French magazine "Intelligence Newsletter", indicating that the Kosovo experience was the focus at this symposium. In the Kosovo crisis there was no military censorship of the kind that existed during the Gulf war. This time NATO tried to use more subtle methods to regulate the flow of information. The U.S. Army leadership seems to have concluded that new and more aggressive measures in psychological warfare are needed. Not only do the psyops people want to spread handpicked 'information' and keep other news quiet, the army also wants to control the Internet, to wage electronic warfare against disobedient media, and to control commercial satellites.

Still, the psyops people in Arlington were not entirely satisfied with news handing during the war on Serbia. In their opinion, too much information about the unplanned results of the bombings came to the surface. Rear-admiral Thomas Steffens of the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) reportedly would like to have had the capacity to bring down an "informational cone of silence" over areas where special operations were in place. What that can mean in reality was shown by the bombing of the Serbian state television RTS in Belgrade. At least fourteen people died in that NATO attack. (See "Chicken-Heart" item on page 3). Another high-ranking officer of SOCOM, Colonel Romeo Morrissey, said in his review that NATO also should have taken out the Serbian radio station B-92. The B-92 coverage of the bombings did not correspond with the information NATO brought out on its press shows in Brussels. Journalists who regularly logged in on the internet site of B-92 succeeded, bit by bit, in undermining NATO's message. And that is something psyops people don't like.

Haider's Reeboks

Just as in Europe, prominent people here are still busy striking moral attitudes about Joerg Haider, the Austrian head of the Freedom Party still being treated as the greatest menace to Austrian decorum since the Turkish onslaught on Vienna in 1683. Try this one from Paul Fireman, chairman and CEO of Reebok International, handed down from Mount Reebok, in Stoughton, Mass, on Feb 11, 2000.

"In 1994, I learned from an associate in London that Joerg Haider appeared in an Austrian video wearing Reebok products. Upon learning of this, I ordered an immediate investigation and found that an employee in Austria, acting on his own behalf, without any knowledge of Reebok International, had provided product for this video. This individual's actions were a clear violation of Reebok's code of conduct and totally against what we stand for. I asked for his immediate dismissal from our Austrian subsidiary. Reebok responded quickly and responsibly to a deplorable situation. Reebok has never supported Haider. His opinions are abhorrent to me personally and in direct conflict with the values of human rights that form the core values of this company."

Reebok just closed a factory in Indonesia, firing 4,000 workers. When Reebok's lawyer was asked about severance, he is reported to have replied, "Over my dead body". So here we have a company that makes its money off the sweat of ill-paid Asians, many of them teenagers, and its boss strikes a great moral posture about his "core values", firing the

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Published twice monthly except August, 22 issues a year:
$40 individuals,
$100 institutions,
$30 student/low-income
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CounterPunch
3220 N. St., NW, PMB 346
Washington, DC, 20007-2829
1-800-840-3683 (phone)
1-800-967-3620 (fax)
www.counterpunch.org

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unfortunate fellow who gave Haider a pair of Reeboks six years ago.

CHICKEN-HEARTED

When the Committtee to Protect Journalists issued its end-of-year report on journalists killed around in the world in 1999, Siddarth Varadarajan, one of the senior editors of the Times of India, noticed that the Committee listed only 33, whereas by his count the total was 47. He discovered that the Washington DC-based Committee had not listed the 14 Serb tv and radio personnel killed by NATO's bombs. (There were no Western casualties because these journalists were privily warned to stay away from the target area.)Varadarajan taxed the Committee with the omission and was told that after strenuous reflection the Committee to Protect had omitted these victims because RTS had been a carrier of Serb propaganda, a rationale which sits oddly with the Committee's protest to NATO after the bombing that it was a threat to journalists everywhere.

Even before the disclosure that CNN has hosted psyops personnel from the Pentagon, it was noted as a particularly shameless propagandist for US government policy. Are we to suppose that the CPJ would not have listed propaganda flack Christiane Amanpour, plus CNN news crew members, if a Serb had blown them up last year? The Committee To Protect Journalists says it is making further investigation.

SING WHILE YOU SLAVE

When the Congress works after midnight, you just know they can't be up to anything good. The latest proof of this axiom involves the continuing rip-off of musicians and songwriters by the big record companies. The issue centers on a much-disputed area of copyright law, a subject as convoluted as the Cretan labyrinth. But what it comes down to is who will control the multi-billion dollar tidal wave of royalties from cd sales, radio airplay, and fees for music used in commercials and movies. In the past, the record companies, through slick talk, fancy lawyering, outright fraud and brazen theft, have enjoyed near total control over revenues from music they didn't write and didn't perform. But in recent years recording artists and songwriters, armed with better contracts and their own attorneys, have begun to fight back, threatening to bite into the profits of the big record companies.

Al Gore, Tipper's Mussolini: Al could "keep the trains running on time and the economy strong".

Now the entertainment industry has tried to get Congress to restore the good-old-days by enacting laws that extend the right of noncreators to own those rights in virtual perpetuity. The record companies craved the same kind of advantage as their higher-tech counterparts, but under the copyright law, records weren't eligible to be "works for hire"--and it is work-for-hire that allows Microsoft, Disney, and other corporations to treat almost all of their creative employees as if they were contract workers who are paid a flat fee for the work they do. Now it's law that records are "works-for hire." It wasn't a popular move, which explains why it happened after midnight.

In the waning hours of work on the FY 2000 appropriations bill in late November, Stan Mitchell (Mitch) Glazier, the majority counsel for the House Judiciary committee's subcommittee on Intellectual Property and the Courts, quietly popped three lines into the mammoth pieces of legislation. Those sentences, dubbed the work-for-hire amendment, had been long craved for by the Recording Industry Association of America, the $50 million-a-year trade association for the big record companies.

The work-for-hire measure will put billions of dollars into the coffers of record companies over the next several decades — money that rightfully belongs to songwriters and performers.

Both the committee chairman, the cantankerous North Carolina Republican Howard Coble, and the ranking Democrat, Californian Howard Berman, a faithful emissary for the entertainment industry, have denied all knowledge of how the amendment came to be. The subcommittee never held hearings on the matter and there is no evidence in the Congressional Record of any debate on work-for-hire. Although it happens all the time on the Hill, it is, of course, unconstitutional for unelected staffers to author legislation. Glazier claims he was acting on behalf of the chairman.

In this case, the stench is worse because Mitch Glazier was clearly doing the bidding of the RIAA. A few weeks after Congress adjourned Glazier resigned his position with the Judiciary Committee and took a $500,000 a year job with the trade association as its chief lobbyist. That's a boost of more than $400,000 a year in pay for helping record companies continue to screw artists out of their pay.

Publicly, the RIAA offers itself as the quintessence of Hollywood liberalism. Its chief executive, Hillary Rosen — often seen in the company of liberal recording stars such as Don Henley and Bonnie Raitt — is a top Democratic donor. She is openly gay and has been singled out as one of the country's most powerful lesbians. Behind the scenes, however, the RIAA is something else entirely. It regularly flushes money into the campaigns of rightwing Republicans, including Henry Hyde, Orin Hatch, Strom Thurmond, Spencer Abraham, Jeff Sessions, Conrad Burns, Dennis Hastert, Kay Bailey Hutchinson and Bob Barr. In other words, the core membership of Congress' race-baiting, gay-bashing and anti-abortion caucus. Moreover, all of the House managers for the impeachment trial of Bill Clinton received generous campaign contributions from the RIAA, even the woefully inept Ed Bryant, whom Monica Lewinsky deftly humiliated during her deposition.

Glazier is not the only lobbyist in the RIAA's stable. It also retains Clinton intimates Liz Robbins (a Lincoln bedroom guest who hosted a big bash for Bill and Hillary at her house in the Hamptons) and Podesta.com (the first dot com lobbying outfit, run by Anthony Podesta, brother of Clinton's chief of staff). But to maximize its lobbying might the RIAA's also recruits from the ranks of the rightwing on K Street, including Tim Powers, a former flack at the RNC; Steve Hart, who served as a special assistant to that foe of the First Amendment, Ed Meese; and Newt Gingrich's former legislative aide, Anthony Roda.

The revolving door is a timeless fixture in Washington. But the trajectory of Mitch Glazier's career is something to marvel at. He went to Vanderbilt University, graduated from Northwestern Law School in 1991, worked as a law clerk and

(**OLS** continued on page 4)

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(OLS, *continued from p. 3)*

then in 1994 (just three years out of law school) landed a job with one of congress's titans, Henry Hyde, working in one of the most powerful spots on the Hill, the House Judiciary Committee. In Washington it is rare for legal rookies to secure such influential positions on the merits of their intellectual prowess alone. You need connections. Glazier had them.

His mother served under Hyde as the manager of his staff. Glazier himself seems to have had an almost filial relationship with Hyde benefitting greatly from the great man's largesse. Courtesy of Hyde, Glazier was a frequent flyer at the public's expense, traveling to China, Spain, Panama, Chile, Korea, Japan, Ecuador, Argentina and Italy.

It is naïve to think that any of this will prompt a zealous ethical inquiry by the Congress. But just in case, the RIAA has an ace-in-the-hole. Howard Berman, one of its chief water-carriers, sits on the House Ethics Committee. Case closed.

Gore as Il Duce

Tipper Gore, promoting her guy at a rally at Dartmouth College in mid January, said Al would "keep the trains running on time and the economy strong". Is it okay these days to be compared to Mussolini? It was of course Il Duce's famous boast that he kept those trains a-coming in timely fashion. In fact the trains were often late in fascist Italy, but Mussolini made it a crime to point this out.

Tipper would have been better advised to steer clear of trains and simply cite a mid-January Gallup poll in which respondents were tested on what Gallup friskily described as "the more personal and less serious dimensions" of the candidates. On looks and smartness Al ran ahead of Bradley, Bush and McCain, while tying with George W as the one "you would most like to have dinner with". A sturdy 88 per cent of circumspect Americans would pass on the opportunity to break bread with Bradley. CounterPunch stands in solidarity with the 4 per cent of Americans who reckon that Al Gore is the oldest candidate, John McCain the tallest and Bill Bradley the shortest..

Race Purity and US Medical Opionion

On this matter of real Nazism, the Annals of Internal Medicine has just published an interesting account of German and US sterilization policies earlier in the century. The authors underestimate the number of US sterilizations, reckoning that the number of people neutered here was under 70,000 and that the practice stopped in the early 1960s. Wrong. In 1974 Judge Gerhard Gesell said that "Over the last few years, an estimated 100,000 to 150,000 low-income persons have been sterilized annually in federally funded programs." The late Allan Chase quoted this in his great book The Legacy of Malthus, and noted that the US rate equalled that of Nazi Germany where the 12-year career of the Third Reich after the German Sterilization Act of 1933 (inspired by US laws) saw 2 million Germans sterilized as social inadequates. Gesell pointed out that though Congress had decreed that family planning programs function on a voluntary basis "an indefinite number of poor people have been improperly coerced into accepting a sterilization operation under the threat that various federally funded benefits would be withdrawn... Patients receiving Medicaid assistance at childbirth are evidently the most frequent targets of this pressure."

Feeble-mindedness bred "servile, useful people who do the dirty work of the race."

Though unaware of Chase's work or of Gesell's ruling, the authors of the Yale study have amassed some interesting material. For example, during the years when Americans were being involuntarily sterilized as part of a multi-state eugenics program, what did the leading medical journals here have to say on the topic in their editorials? The authors reviewed the relevant periodicals between 1930 and 1945. The American Journal of Medicine, the Annals of Internal Medicine and the American Journal of Psychiatry had nothing to say.

The American Journal of Public Health had one anonymous editorial on mental health that the authors describe as "relevant" probably because it suggested that rising rates of hospitalization for the mentally infirm didn't necessarily mean that American's mental IQ was falling, a widely held belief that was exploited by the advocates of eugenic sterilization.This was the most influential conclusion of a very influential report on eugenic sterilization put out by the American Neurological Association in 1935, which recommended that sterilization be voluntary. But the special committee convened by the Association did not contest the widely held view that mentally defective people were a drain on national resources. The committee took a positive view of feeblemindedness on the grounds that it breeds "servile, useful people who do the dirty work of the race." The committee reviewed the Germany sterilization law of 1933 and praised it for precision and scientific grounding.

The editorial record of the New England Journal in the early 1930s was awful. Editorials lamented the supposed increase in the rate of American feeblemindedness as dangerous and the economic burden of supporting the mentally feeble as "appalling". In 1934 The Journal's editor, Morris Fishbein, wrote that "Germany is perhaps the most progressive nation in restricting fecundity among the unfit" and argued that the "individual must give way to the greater good".

But by the mid-1930s, particularly after the report from the Neurological Association and energetic interventions by the chairman of its special committee, Abraham Myerson , the New England Journal had a change of heart and declared that sterilization laws to prevent propagation were "unwise" and sterilization should not be mandatory. The Journal of the American Medical Association followed the same curve. The issue never goes away. The eugenic impulse is always lurking.

These days it's surfacing once again, this time in programs of genetic improvement., also in old-fashioned coercive sterilization. In Monroe, Louisiana, Kathy Looney, 29, convicted of abusing three of her eight children, was ordered at the end of February to undergo medical sterilization or face 10 years in jail. District Judge Carl V. Sharp issued a 10-year suspended sentence and placed Looney on five years of probation. "I don't want to have to lock you up to keep you from having any more children, so some kind of medical procedure is needed to make sure you don't." Looney's lawyer has asked the judge to reconsider. **CP**

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(**McCain** *continued from page 1*)
San Diego, where he thundered, "Republicans have to do a lot more than they are doing today on the environment". Aside from generic calls to fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (which gets its money from royalties from off-shore oil drilling), McCain tends to leave the particulars fuzzy. His votes in the Senate have gone somewhat beyond his call for "greater flexibility", embracing takings legislation, opening of the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling, and Bob Dole's regulatory reform bill.

When the interests of the military and the environment come into conflict, as often happens in the Western states, there's no question where John McCain stands. In 1993, McCain placed a hold on the nomination of Mollie Beatie, Clinton's choice to head the Fish and Wildlife Service. McCain had been told by his buddies in the Marine Air Corps that the Fish and Wildlife Service planned to halt low-level flights above the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Reserve, near Yuma, Arizona. McCain's strong-arm tactics worked. Bruce Babbitt sent the senator a letter pledging that the military fly-bys would not be impeded. With this easy conquest of Babbitt under his belt, McCain struck again the following year, when he placed a rider onto the California Desert Preservation Act, allowing military flights over the wilderness areas and national preserves created by the act.

Last year McCain attached a rider to the Defense Appropriations bill that would have permanently transferred to the Pentagon 7.2 million acres of federal wildlife refuge land managed by the BLM and the Fish and Wildlife Service, where they would become used as a bombing range and a testing ground for a new generation of missiles. McCain's rider would have exempted the military from conducting any environmental review of its programs and he backs the creation of even more nuclear waste by standing forth as one of the nuclear power industry's most reliable allies.

Much of the blame for McCain's reputation can be laid to our gullible press. Living on Earth, the NPR environmental show, recently produced a puff piece touting McCain as the Senate's most environmentally conscious Republican. Of course, most of McCain's act is scripted for the photo op. When the chips are on the table, McCain can be counted on to do the bidding of industry. Take the issue of subsidies. In 1996, McCain introduced a bill that would have slashed corporate welfare, including millions in subsidies to big timber in form of federally-funded logging roads. The measure was enthusiastically received by liberals and the Wasington press corps, which wasted no time hailing McCain as a "maverick" and a "renegade Republican". But a few months later McCain had the opportunity to make part of his plan reality, but he defected, voting against a measure offered by Sen. Richard Bryant, the Nevada Democrat, that would have have eliminated the very same timber road subsidies. McCain didn't explain his backdown.

McCain played a terrible role in one of Arizona's most explosive issues, the mad scheme by the University of Arizona to erect seven deep space telescopes on national forest lands at the summit of Mt. Graham, which is known as a sky island, a lush montane oasis rising out of the Sonoran desert. In its upper reaches, Mt. Graham is cloaked in a dense alpine spruce-fir forest unique in the world. It is home to more than 18 endangered plants and animals, the most famous of which is the Mt. Graham red squirrel, found nowhere else. Mt. Graham is not only an ecological marvel, it is also a sacred mountain to the San Carlos Apache.

Neither of these factors carried weight with McCain, who was hellbent on doing favors for the University. He duly introduced legislation exempting the $520 million project from compliance with the Endangered Species Act, Antiquities Act and the Native American Religious Freedom Act.

In the spring of 1989, the Forest Service began to raise questions about the project. Worried about the impacts on the endangered Mt. Graham red squirrel, Jim Abbott, the supervisor of the Coronado National Forest, ordered a halt to road construction at the site. The delay infuriated McCain. On May 17, 1989, Abbott got a call from Mike Jimenez, McCain's chief of staff. Jimenez told Abbot that McCain was angry and wanted to meet with him the next day. He told Abbott to expect "some ass-chewing". At the meeting, McCain raged, threatening Abbott that "if you do not cooperate on this project [bypassing the Endangered Species Act], you'll be the shortest-tenured forest supervisor in the history of the Forest Service". Unfortunately for McCain, there was a witness to this encounter, a ranking Forest Service employee named Richard Flannelly, who recorded the encounter in his notebook. This notebook was later turned over to investigators at the GAO.

A few days later, McCain called Abbott to apologize. But the call sounded more like an attempt to bribe the Forest Supervisor to go along with the project. According to a 1990 GAO report on the affair, McCain "held out a carrot that with better cooperation, he would see about getting funding for Mr. Abbott's desired recreation projects". Environmentalists attempted to bring an ethics complaint against McCain, citing a federal law that prohibits anyone (including members of Congress) from browbeating federal agency personnel. The Senate ethics committee never pursued the matter. When the GAO report, condemning McCain, surfaced publicly, McCain lied about the encounter, calling the allegations "groundless" and "silly".

"To my mind, McCain's the most likely candidate to start a nuclear war."

In 1992, Robin Silver and Bob Weissman went to meet with McCain at his office in Phoenix to discuss Mt. Graham. Silver and Weissman are both physicians. Weissman is now retired and Silver works in the emergency room at Phoenix hospital. The doctors say that at the mention of the words Mt. Graham McCain erupted into a violent fit. "He slammed his fists on his desk, scattering papers across the room", Silver tells us. "He jumped up and down, screaming obscenities at us for at least 10 minutes. He shook his fists as if he was going to slug us. It was as violent as almost any domestic abuse altercation."

Weissman left the meeting stunned: "I'm a lifelong environmentalist, but what really scares me about McCain is not his environmental policies, which are horrid, but his violent, irrational temper.I think McCain is so unbalanced that if Vladimir Putin told him something he didn't like he'd lose it, start beating his chest about having his finger on the nuclear trigger. Who knows where it would stop. To my mind, McCain's the most likely candidate to start a nuclear war." **CP**

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A CounterPunch Journey to a Win-Win Solution

The Killing of Carmel Mountain

By Susan Davis

Cooked up in 1991 by George Bush and Pete Wilson of California, then seized on by Al Gore and Bruce Babbitt, a crafty ploy called the Multi-Species Conservation Plan has become the weapon of choice of real estate developers to nullify the Endangered Species Act and destroy the choicest remnants of natural habitat that still survive in America today. It will be coming soon to an ecosystem near you. Here's what happened in its first big test run in San Diego County.

Every day hundreds of hikers and joggers sweat their way uphill to the red cliff tops at San Diego's Torrey Pines State Park, whence a view of the Pacific ocean, maybe a glimpse of a migrating grey whale, the scent of black sage. Keep your eyes on the western horizon and try not to glance back to the view eastward over Los Penasquitos estuary and Interstate Five.

At the intersection of the San Diego Freeway and Routes 805 and 56 the California Department of Transportation is building one of the largest interchanges in California, presumptively in the entire world: a convulsion of concrete and asphalt that in just a few years will knit together twenty north-south lanes. Rising above this "merge" is Carmel Mountain (so named for the convent founded by Irish nuns back in the 1890s), a series of tilted mesas once covered with some of Southern California's last remaining coastal sage scrub and maritime chapparal. Under the freeways is the upper end of the delicate Penasquitos estuary, one of California's last unpaved wetlands.

In any silhouette familiar to all the previous inhabitants of the region, Carmel Mountain has ceased to exist. The mesa has been scraped and graded, its canyons filled in and paved, its cliffs and ridges re-contoured into strangely symmetrical waves. Millions of tons of its soft, sandy shoulders are being sliced off and hauled away. The landform looks like a giant green cake that's been attacked with a serrated knife. On its newly shaved surfaces, shallow steps are cut to keep soil from washing or blowing away. The steps are then sprayed with green dye and ground cover seeds. The result is a low, sandy pyramid that stretches for several sad miles. The pyramid's sides have been planted with stucco cubes holding insurance, HMO, and real estate offices. Its flat top is spread thick with ocean view estates, priced "from the low $1,000,000s".

In conversation, no one mentions what's happening to Carmel Mountain. The awful scene creates a kind of numbness.

I don't know if most commuters travelling I-5 remember what Carmel Mountain looked like even a few years ago. When traffic is moving, I imagine most hunch away from the side window and try to not to look. In conversation, no one mentions what's happening to Carmel Mountain. The awful scene creates a kind of numbness. On the other hand, when you're stuck in the traffic at the merge, it's hard to miss the fleets of bulldozers above you, hectically reworking Carmel's slopes. As I watch them, though the memories are becoming harder to retrieve, I can recall the mesa's massive flanks, green with wild mustard in springtime, a dangerous crisp gold in fall.

San Diego's coastal mesas used to be ocean bottom — soft, compressed sand and mud that pushed upward less than a million years ago. Small rivers and creeks draining from the east eroded wide valleys like Penasquitos, Sorrento and Carmel, and cut hundreds of tiny, steep finger canyons. Soft chapparal evolved to cover the hills and canyons. The coast gets less than ten inches of rain a year, but with fog and ocean mist there's enough moisture to support a fragrant scrub of sages, mints, lemonade berry, cactus and brittlebrush. Hundreds of varieties of plants and wildflowers make a unique mosaic; some species, like *Dudleyia brevifolia* and Del Mar manzanita, are found nowhere else. Fragile networks of vernal pools sustain amphibians and the San Diego fairy shrimp, a rare invertebrate.

Native Americans fished and gathered; the Spanish and Mexicans, and later Anglos ran cattle in the valleys. In this century, they also dry-farmed beans and irrigated for tomatoes and strawberries. By the 1960s Carmel Valley was one of the last undeveloped valleys running to the coast. Carmel and Sorrento Creeks still flooded twice daily with the tides, and the hills held affordable rural digs for a few hundred college professors, students, artists and retirees. In the side canyons, semi-hidden ranchos housed Mexican migrant workers. Although humans impinged, estuary, valley and mesa were still connected in a rich, working ecosystem, in part because San Diego held much of the area around Carmel Mountain in an urban reserve of agricultural and wild lands. Up and down the valleys, from the river mouth to the foothills of the Santa Anas, deer, mountain lion and bobcat freely roamed.

As I-5 was completed in the sixties, the big developers understood that freeway access had turned the scrubby-looking coastal mesas into prime real estate. Pardee Construction Company, a subsidiary of Weyerhaeuser, bought up large patches of

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land and persuaded elected officials that the urban reserve needed to be planned to save it from .... developers. A thirty years' war ensued between the developers, with the city and its planners in their pocket, and community activists and ecologists mustered in an uneven coalition that fought, year after year, the area's destruction.

One of these long-haul warriors is Isabelle Kay, an ecologist who manages land reserves for the University of California. She's fought for Carmel Mountain for years. "It's an absolutely unique land form", she says. Even though most of it fell outside the protected area, "it was designated by the city as a core area of the highest quality habitat and very important to save. From the 1960s on, it was always marked red on every map." But by the mid-1970s, the San Diego Planning Commission was issuing orders limiting development in the urban reserve one day, and granting loopholes and exceptions the next. Under public pressure to conform to their own past plans, city council members repeatedly decried the "lack of planning". The calls for more planning led in turn to zoning shifts and more sketches for "managing" the growth of the new tract neighborhoods Pardee had begun to build. Carmel Mountain was becoming an island.

In retrospect, Isabelle Kay sees the planning process itself was an enormous part of the problem. "It was a shell game." Once developer-guided planning was underway in the urban reserve, speculative pressure fell upon on Carmel Mountain. Here too Pardee had bought several hundred acres and was pressuring the city to allow construction. The city produced an environmental impact report which argued that development of the mesa, now renamed "Neighborhood 8-A", would have devastating environmental effects. But then, at the developer's behest, the planners broke the mesa into five smaller neighborhoods; each of these developments was put through the city's approval process separately, absorbing enormous amounts of local activist energy. And although the neighborhood plans were said to be just "plans" — not facts about the future — land values shot up as each was approved, raising the developers' stake in each project. When Kay and the Carmel Mountain Conservancy objected that building subdivisions would have terrible effects on plants, animals and the watershed as a whole, they were told "8A has had an EIR." Never mind that the piecemeal plans flouted it.

Southern maritime chapparal had been reduced to 2,400 acres in the US. And 400 of these were on Carmel Mountain.

If planning simply greased the wheels of development, could anything else have saved the mesa? The federal Endangered Species Act did slow things down, since the mesa was home to the California gnatcatcher, and the fairy shrimp, both listed. But Carmel's real biological uniqueness was the patterns of its vegetation, and the Endangered Species Act does not protect plants on private lands. The Carmel Mountain Conservancy and its allies fought the subdivisions, one by one, while urging the city to buy the mesa outright.

Then Pete Wilson brought Natural Communities Conservation Planning to San Diego. Influenced by Pardee's vice-president Mike Madigan and sensitive to the needs of big real estate, in 1991 the governor claimed that the Endangered Species Act and the gnatcatcher were causing an "environmental train wreck" that had to be stopped. Under Wilson's scheme, enforcement of the ESA would be suspended while a coalition of governments, planning authorities, developers, and state and federal agencies, including the Fish and Wildlife Service and the State Department of Fish and Game, set up systems of linked preserves to provide permanent habitat for threatened birds, plants and animals. Not coincidentally and at the same time the Bush administration slashed Fish and Wildife's staff and declared a moratorium on species listings.

With astonishingly diverse terrain and more than eighty threatened and endangered plants and animals, San Diego County was one of the first big test cases of Wilson's, Babbitt's and Bush's magical plan. Its Multiple Species Conservation Plan is a patchwork of 172,000 acres spread over 900 square miles. The "Plan" directs regulatory focus to whole habitats, and so Carmel Mountain had everyone's close attention: Southern California's coastal sage scrub was nearly gone, and by the mid-1990s, San Diego had lost 97% of its vernal pools. Southern maritime chapparal had been reduced to 2,400 acres in the United States, and four hundred of these were on Carmel Mountain.

An important operating principle of Wilson-Babbitry is that local governments rather than the feds should take the lead in interpreting environmental regulations. Of course, local officials are likely to be very close to local real estate interests. In San Diego they are one and the same. Wilson-Babbitry urges "flexible" (winsome word!) interpretation of the rules to create "win-win" solutions. Flexibility means that developers get to cut environmental deals, swapping or selling left-over and undesirable land into the habitat preserve against the right to develop on or next to sensitive land. These scraps need have no value as habitat and in San Diego "essential corridors" between bits of habitat can turn out to be asphalt highways or concrete culverts. Most important, the MSCP installs special protections for the land speculators: after a development has been approved under the plan, no further environmental limits can be imposed for fifty years (in the Riverside and Orange County versions of the plan,

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it is seventy years). This "no surprises" clause means that no matter what happens to a species, a watershed, or in the world of science, nothing will interfere with the owner's ability to profit from that piece of land.

Carmel Mountain was one of the first casualties of the Multiple Species Conservation Plan. The activists were optimistic at first. Alison Rolfe of the Southwest Center for Biodiversity says "We were really hopeful that the MSCP would help us save Carmel Mountain, and we tried to work with it." "All the talk of holistic planning made people think it was going to be done right," Isabelle Kay laments. The mesa glowed bright red on Fish and Wildlife's maps. But Kay and her allies quickly found out what flexibility really meant. Frustrated by the locals' insistence that the mesa was an irreplaceable resource, Pardee huddled with City Manager Jack McGrory, a noted pro-development fixer, to talk about the fate of what by now were fabulously valuable holdings. Together, behind closed doors, they simply redrew the dimensions of the core habitat area on the mountain's map.

Although this creative cartography was rejected by every scientist and environmental group as scientifically unsound, Fish and Wildlife approved it. Although city council timidly disavowed the new line, somehow it always appeared on subsequent maps. In the bait and switch that followed, the developers simply began moving the boundaries on parcels as needed, transfering sensitive packages out from under scrutiny, trading small wildlife reserves for the space to build golf courses. In the endgame, Pardee proposed that it would cede 150 acres of the most contested acres to habitat preserve if the city would guarantee it unrestricted development of another package in the urban reserve. Since this release of public land had to be approved by voters, Pardee demanded that the Sierra Club publicly endorse the swap. Th Sierra Club graciously complied.

It's over for Carmel Mountain, Del Mar Mesa, and Penasquitos Lagoon as an ecosystem.

Fourteen local organizations, led by Alison Rolfe, are suing Fish and Wildlife to halt the Multiple Species Conservation Plan in San Diego, Riverside and Orange Counties, arguing that it destroys wetlands and creates the fragmentation it claims to prevent. Isabelle Kay figures that even the old agricultural zoning, with the ESA, would have protected much more of Carmel Mountain and its environs. The MSCP, she says, "treats subdivisions like living organisms and living organisms as if they are inert".

It's over for Carmel Mountain, Del Mar Mesa and Penasquitos Lagoon as an ecosystem. Canyons through which seasonal streams ran are blocked with concrete. Wildlife corridors where Isabelle Kay once photographed thousands of animal tracks in mud have been sealed off by the I-5 expansion. Though still beautiful to look at, the estuary is a heavily silted catchment for suburban storm sewers. Its exit into the ocean at Torrey Pines beach is too polluted for swimming, although it's rarely posted. Even the valley's sense of open space has been lost. Residents who could once walk to the lagoon are now cut off by six lanes of surface traffic. "Public hiking trails" border the freeways and cut through parking lots.

Even though the MSCP was a George Bush-Pete Wilson production, it will no doubt be used this year to help position Al Gore as a forward-looking green. The "success" of the Multiple Species Conservation Plan in San Diego county is being touted by the Nature Conservancy. Don't doubt that this same process is coming soon to an ecosystem near you, especially if your region has a hot economy and a lot of open space left. But take a drive down I-5 and get a look at what's left of Carmel Mountain. It's what a win-win solution really looks like. **CP**

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